

THE MANDALORIANS:

People and Culture

By Karen Traviss

In five millennia, the Mandalorians fought with and against a thousand armies on a thousand worlds. They learned to speak as many languages and absorbed weapons, technology, and tactics from every war. And yet, despite the overwhelming influence of alien cultures, and the absence of a true home world and even species, their own language not only survived but changed little; their way of life and their philosophy remained untouched; and their ideals and sense of family, of identity, of nation, were only strengthened. Armor is not what makes a Mandalorian. Armor is simply a manifestation of an impenetrable, unassailable heart. (Mandalorians: Identity and Language, published by the Galactic Institute of Anthropology)

ORIGINS

Mandalorians are people of contradictions. They have an unmistakable identity, yet they're not a true race. They have no country in the conventional sense and are scattered across the galaxy. These feared warriors have a savage reputation but they cherish family life and will adopt children orphaned by war, rather than kill them as other species might. This odd blend of tough pragmatism, brutality and affectionate family life makes them a mystery to many.

And they're probably not even the *original* Mandalorian race. Anthropologists disagree about their roots; did they begin as humans or, as a few academics still claim, a gray-skinned non-human species? Whichever theory you find most convincing, they became a species of predominantly human nomadic warriors.

For the vast majority of species, culture is the unique expression of their being. When species are overrun by other cultures, and adopt their beliefs and practices, they still retain something of their old ways.

But the Mandalorians are an exception. They adopted a culture and became completely defined by it. Their nearest parallel, ironically, is the Jedi-- with whom the Mandalorians have had so much antagonism and conflict.

Whatever drove the first humans to adopt Mandalorian customs and language, they remain a people who accept anyone willing to follow their code, and non-human species are welcomed into the community. Mandalorians believe that you are what you do, not what an accident of birth dictates.

But they're still predominantly human, and a large percentage of the population shows genetic markers typical of the peoples of Concord Dawn and nearby planets. Although there is no true Mandalorian ethnic type, the prevalence of common gene clusters indicates that specific populations were either absorbed by the Mandalorians or joined them.

Concord Dawn is a good example. Jango Fett, one of the icons of Mandalorian history, was adopted. And yet his genome already shared many markers with his adopted community, without deliberate planning, Mandalorians nevertheless selectively bred themselves for certain traits that are now considered their defining characteristics; discipline, close family bonds, extraordinary physical fighting skills, and intense loyalty.

WARRIOR NOMADS

Nomadic peoples prize portable skills more than possessions, and this aspect of the *Mando* mindset still underpins their society even when settled on Mandalore. Even when living in settled communities on Mandalore, their nomadic warrior ethic remains.

Inevitably, a nomadic warrior race with no fixed territory to defend becomes associated with mercenary activity. For centuries the *Mando'ade* --- or children of Mandalore, as they call themselves --- have been seen as little more than bounty hunters, assassins, and mercenaries.

But not all *Mando'ade* spend their lives as hired soldiers. Their mercenary history is very recent and relatively brief, and they have other trades related to soldiering that earn them a living when they aren't at war.

Many, scattered across the galaxy in small communities, earn their living as weaponsmiths, bodyguards and other occupations that the host population finds too dangerous or too dirty. Many remain in the Mandalore sector, working the land or laboring in factories and workshops. All of them, though, are capable of becoming an army at a moment's notice.

Over the centuries, some have questioned the Mandalorian compulsion to cling to nomadic ways despite having a home world in Mandalore. The practice, though, is more than attachment to tradition. Mandalorians spread themselves to avoid presenting enemies with a convenient target. Despite repeated attacks that were thought to have wiped them out, the resilient Mandalorians keep coming back.

While they have earned their living more recently as soldiers of fortune, most of the Mandalorians' history has been spent fighting for their own purposes, not others. But although they're a ruthless enemy, they display an unexpected gentle side in warfare by adopting war orphans.

What Makes A Mandalorian

Geography has played a nebulous role in Mandalorian identity. Although Mandalore is regarded as their homeworld, many Mandalorians were not born there and many have never even seen the planet.

Their society places no emphasis on birthplace, species, or citizenship, and so *Mando'ade* have not "state" as modern galactic politics understands it. They ignore rank and status and prefer to judge by actions and achievements, true meritocracy; the Mandalore, or leader of the clans, is the nearest they have to a head of state. And yet nobody mistakes Mandalorians for any other people when they see them.

Mando'ade regard the following six acts --- known as the Six Actions, or *Resol'Nare* --- as central to Mandalorian identity: wearing armor, speaking the Mandalorian language, defending themselves and their families, raising their children as Mandalorians, contributing to the clan's welfare, and rallying to the *Mand'alor* when called to arms. Anyone who practices them is considered a *Mando'ad*. The emphasis is on carrying out these acts daily, not simply paying lip service to them.

For a people who appear to have little interest in rank or hierarchy, Mandalorians are extremely co-operative in combat. The rugged individuality so marked in their approach to most things is set aside to reach a common goal, and they'll do whatever it takes to achieve their objective. Their fighting forces settle into informal command structures almost without thought or effort, focused on the outcome and not personal ambition. This instinctive flexibility is also what makes them superb mercenaries.

Because they're self-selecting, they attract and retain people with the same mindset and genetic predisposition, which reinforces these traits. The more that soldiers are to [sic] inclined to co-operate on the battlefield, the more likely they are to survive and produce children with the same characteristics.

Mandalorian Society

There is no gender in the Mandalorian language. This mirrors the equal status of men and women and the general flexibility of societal roles, despite what appears to many to be a traditional division of tasks along gender lines.

Men are expected to be warriors and to raise and train their sons to be the same. Women maintain the home wherever the nomads happen to travel, and raise the daughters. But women also are expected to have the combat skills of a man in order to defend the homestead when the men are away. Women also fight alongside men on the battlefield. If they have no dependent children to care for, they're expected to share the responsibilities of defense and warfare.

Not surprisingly, the Mandalorian female ideal that men respect is not fragile and graceful but physically strong, enduring and gritty. The word *laandur* (delicate), is a common insult among women. If you imply that a *Mando* woman is a bad mother, a poor fighter, or a *laandur* (weakling) you'll find out the hard way that she's none of these things.

Marriage is expected to be for life --- which is sometimes prematurely short for warriors -- and usually takes place soon after Mandalorians turn 16. A couple enters into a legal commitment simply by making the following pledge to each other:

Mandalorian	Translation
Mhi solus tome	We are one when together
Mhi solus dar'tome	We are one when parted
Mhi me'di	We share all
Mhi ba'juri verde	We will raise warriors

Despite their emphasis on fidelity and chastity before marriage, Mandalorians are surprisingly forgiving and relatively unconcerned with parentage. As they prize action and pragmatism above words and intentions, they take the view that *aliit ori'shya tal'din* (family is more than bloodline). It's the daily affirmations of the family life that matters to them, which explains their propensity for adoption and even welcoming adults into the *Mando* fold. With many widows and orphans in the Mandalorian community, suitable foreign adult males are not only welcome but also necessary.

The adoption process, like marriage, is a simple statement of intention: the *gai bal manda* (name and soul) takes its place in the declaration *ni kyr'tayl gai sa'ad* (I know your name as my child). That, and the ongoing adherence to the six tenets of Mandalorian life, is all it takes to become Mandalorian.

Just as it's possible to become a Mandalorian, it's also possible to lose your Mandalorian status, renounce it, or even have it taken from you. Exile is a rare but feared punishment.

The Mandalorian Family

"Their definition of offspring or parent is more by relationship than birth; Adoption is extremely common, and it's not unusual for mercenaries to take war orphans as their sons or daughters if they impress them with their aggression and tenacity." (Mandalorians: Identity and Its Influence on Genome, published by the Galactic Institute of Anthropology.)

In exceptional circumstances, such as abandonment or a failure to live up to responsibilities, partners and divorce each other simply by declaring that they are *shuk'la riduurok* (a broken

love). Children may also disown their father or mother by declaring them *dar'buir* (no longer a parent). This is rare and usually only follows abandonment or an act of cowardice that shames them family.

If the first child is a son, parents may wait eight years before having another child so that the first is old enough to accompany his father and be trained as a soldier for five years until he reaches adulthood at 13. Then his father is free to train a younger son. At 13, both girls and boys undergo a rite of passage in military and survival skills that makes them legally adults.

If the firstborn is a girl, the couple may try for a son soon afterwards. A daughter will usually stay with her mother until she marries. But if a couple has only daughters, the girls will be trained as warriors by their father exactly as boys would be. Boys learn their earliest lessons from their mothers before the age of eight, so her fighting skills are critical; a couple pledges to raise warriors, and this is a joint commitment.

Women are expected to train their daughters in combat skills, but fathers also take part in their daughter's education. Despite their fiercely masculine reputation, Mandalorian men play an active role in raising their families. Most have a strong parenting instinct, one of the reinforced genetic traits from absorbed populations.

The parents' duty is to train their child in survival skills and Mandalorian culture and language, and to prepare them to raise the next generation of warriors. Elders imbue children with the essential Mandalorian ideals of loyalty to clan and family, personal discipline, courage, and respect for their heritage.

The Mandalorian way of life is a dangerous one and widows and orphans are a fact of life. Families never hesitate to adopt orphans, and unmarried men and women regard it as their duty to take widows and widowers as spouses.

Religion and Spirituality

Mandalorians were once intensely religious but disillusionment with the old fanaticism and worship of war itself gave way to a far less supernatural belief system among modern Mandalorians. They now regard creation tales, such as *Akaanati'dar'oya* (The War of Life and Death), as parables to illustrate a deeper philosophical meaning rather than literal supernaturalism. The stars were mythologized as fallen kings of Mandalore, and there are tales of the mythosaurs, but the pragmatic and skeptical Mandalorians look for allegory in these stories.

The *manda*---best described as a combination of the collective state of being, the essence of being Mandalorian, and an oversoul--- is not viewed as a literal heaven. Traditionally, the *Mando* afterlife is seen as a plane of spiritual energy in constant conflict between stagnation, and the opportunity for change brought about by destruction---a parallel with modern theories of cosmology. In Mandalorian myth, this conflict is symbolized by the eternal war between the

sloth-god Arasuum---the personification of idle consumption and stagnation---and the vigorous destroyer god Kad Ha'rangir, who forces change and growth on the universe.

Every *Mando* warrior who dies is said to add to the army of the afterlife, defending wives and children living in its permanent, peaceful homestead---the only place Mandalorians believe they can ever reach a non-transitory state of existence.

The Concept of Dar'Manda

Mandalorian spirituality has its roots in pragmatism. Living the Mandalorian way and believing in the community's ideals are all that keep a nomadic people together and preserve its identity. Without a commitment to those principles, the community either perishes or is subsumed into the host population. In the absence of a single species, ethnic heritage, and fixed territory, only values and culture survive to pass from generation to generation. If they are not rigorously maintained and reinforced, the community is doomed.

Traditional Mandalorians regard being a *dar'manda*---someone ignorant of their Mandalorian heritage---as the worst fate imaginable. It's a difficult concept for non-Mandalorians (*aruetiise*, which can mean anything from non-*Mando* to enemy) to grasp, but it's the equivalent of having no soul and no afterlife. The obliteration of personal identity mirrors the real obliteration that faces a people who lose their defining culture. Although few Mandalorians believe in a literal afterlife, they do believe in the *manda*.

To be part of the *manda*, the communal spiritual state of being *Mando'ade*, a man or woman must understand the basics of their culture and embody the ideals of the Mandalorian *kar'ta*---the heart, or in this case the soul. This means responsibility for the next generation, loyalty to their people, and a fighting spirit. Without this, a person is considered lost for eternity.

The duty to ensure children know enough of their heritage to be part of the *manda* motivated the *Cuy'val Dar*---the Mandalorian instructors recruited to train the clone troops for the Grand Army of the Republic---to educate their men in *Mando* customs as they would their own sons. The instructors believed that even if the troops died in combat and never lived in the proper *Mando* community, they would have an eternal place in the collective consciousness.

Daily Life --and Death

The *Mando* concept of home (*yaim*) describes the sense of safety and comfort that can be found even in temporary settlements. For a Mandalorian, a home is where the armor lies.

Some nomadic races carry tents, but *Mando'ade* prefer either to build temporary structures, known as *vheh'yaim*, from woven green wood and mud, or to take over the homes of enemies defeated in combat. "Temporary" can mean any period of time from overnight to years. The only certainty is that the *Mando* soldier or family never expects any home to be a permanent one. They're ready to move at a moment's notice. Settled races usually derive their annual festivals from the cycle of the seasons on their home world, but because the *Mando'ade* travel

from world to world, they have often become disconnected from these cycles. Those from Concord Dawn---traditionally a farming community---do still mark the end of the harvest by the world's calendar, but generally the life-cycle events---birth, coming of age, marriage, death---have become the only ones celebrated. The uncertainty of nomadic warrior existence means most Mandalorians celebrate life whenever they get the opportunity, enjoying ale, communal singing, and relaxing with their families and clan.

For professional soldiers, sudden death is an occupational hazard. But Mandalorians don't take it quite as calmly as *aruetiise* might imagine.

Burial is unusual---*Mand'alore* and other people of national importance are exceptions---because nomads traditionally had no cemeteries. It's also impractical to carry dead bodies with the army when men die in combat. Communities cremate their dead if they can recover the body, scatter the ashes, and keep one of the deceased's possessions as a memorial. This is often the whole suit of armor, which is valuable. In cases where the armor can't be recovered or kept, parts such as helmets, gloves or buckles will be taken instead. *Mando'ade* recite the names of dead loved ones and their comrades each night before sleep as a conscious act of keeping their memories---and so their existence---alive.

There is a single *Mando'a* word, *aay'han*, which describes the state of mind when Mandalorians savor a peaceful moment with family and comrades and also grieve for those who've died. The nearest Basic translation is "bittersweet", but it hardly comes close to defining what a significant concept it is for Mandalorians. The emotion's duality is very much in keeping with a people who are a mass of contradictions.

Food and Drink

Soldiers and nomads both need their food to be portable, nourishing, and preferably to require little cooking. Mandalorians are no exception. They have a few distinctive dishes that are, at best, an acquired taste but that fit the need for food that's more like field rations.

Gihaal is a dried fishmeal mixture like pemmican, a nutritious blend of fat and protein that lasts for years without refrigeration but that has a pungent, clinging aroma that many find offensive.

Aruetiise find some other Mandalorian foodstuffs more acceptable. *Uj'alayi* (uj cake) is a dense, flat, and extremely sweet cake made from ground and crushed nuts, dried fruit, spices, and scented *uj'jayl* syrup. *Tihaar* is a strong, colorless spirit made out of any fruit that's available, like an eau-de-vie. While Narcolethe is often seen as the quintessential Mandalorian alcoholic drink, many *Mando'ade* prefer *net'ra gal* (black ale) which is a sweet beer very much like stout or porter. *Shig* is any infusion of herbs or spices drunk hot, and is often made from a quick-growing citrus-flavored herb called *behot*.

Armor

Ask anyone what they associate with Mandalorians, and they'll probably say armor. The *Mando'ade* call it *beskar'gam*, which means iron skin---an indication of how central it is to their life.

Armor, especially the distinctive full-face helmet with the t-shaped visor, is the enduring image the galaxy has of the *Mando'ade*. Armor is prized, especially if it's made from the near-impervious *beskar* (Mandalorian iron), a metal that gets its remarkable strength not only from its natural properties but also from Mandalorian metalworking techniques. The addition of carbons in the foundry creates a molecular cage structure---lighter than normal metals and yet still remarkably strong. It's still regarded as more desirable than durasteel and even cortosis.

Armor is often handed down between generations, especially the *beskar* type. It's intricately customized to suit the wearer's needs and tastes and is worn by both genders.

Armor colors and markings can indicate many things, from the clan or family to more ephemeral concepts such as state of mind or a particular mission. Sand-gold represents a quest for vengeance; black, for justice. *Mando'ade* will often repaint their armor with new colors if they're on a particular task or have changed clans. With the exception of the Mandalore, markings never correspond to fixed rank---a concept they find hard to accept.

Sometimes, though, colors on armor simply express personal preference. Blue and green are especially popular. While other soldiers opt for camouflage, Mandalorians seem not to care about being conspicuous: "it's one thing to see us coming, and another to do something about it" is a common *Mando* saying.

Sigils---symbols painted on the helmet or chest-plate---often identify the wearer's allegiance, lineage, or loved ones. But they can also be marks of honor, such as the *jai'galaar'la sur'hail'se* (shriek-hawk eyes). *Jaig*, as they're better known, are bestowed as awards for bravery by some clan leaders.

But however central armor is to the Mandalorians' culture and self-image, they never forget that it's what lies beneath the armor that makes a soldier. "*Verd ori'shya beskar'gam*" (a warrior is more than his armor) is a popular *Mando* saying.

Mando'ade are a frugal people, and many amass sizeable fortunes. Although modern banking practices mean most put their credits into shares and savings, they still invest much of their wealth in their armor and their weapons. Jewelry, when worn, is plain and functional. It's often a heavy belt of precious metal---a very portable form of currency---or a collar.

Ear piercing is especially frowned upon because earrings can be torn off in a fight, causing injury. If you ever encounter a Mandalorian with pierced ears, and they remove their earrings, run for it. It's a sign that they plan to fight.

Mixing With *Mando'ade*

Mandalorians are much more sociable than generally supposed. Most *aruetiise* encounter them at the point of a blaster, but if you meet them in a more peaceful setting they're usually gracious hosts and honest business associates. As long as you observe the following rules, you need never discover their aggressive side.

- Say what you mean
- Never refuse the offer of a drink or a meal---for nomadic people, who live hand to mouth, this is the greatest compliment they can pay a guest
- *Never* make a pass at a *Mando'ade* of either sex unless you intend to offer marriage and become *Mando*
- Look them in the eye or, if they're wearing helmets, look straight into the horizontal section of the visor.
- Take off your boots when entering their home
- Pay your debts immediately
- Make a fuss of their children
- Treat elderly *Mando'ade* with reverence. Any *Mando* who survives to a venerable age must be an exceptional warrior, and will still be capable of making you regret your lack of respect

Some *aruetiise* find the Mandalorian character and culture so appealing that they join them. This life is not for the faint-hearted, but those who value loyalty, commitment to family, and a passionate zest for life will find the Mandalorian way irresistible.

After all, *aliit ori'shya tal'din*---family is more than bloodlines.

NO WORD FOR HERO:

The Mandalorian Language

The Mandalorians have no word for *hero*, but many different words for *stab*. Being compared to a Hutt is the worst insult, and the word for *mother* and *father* (*buir*) is the same. *Mando'a* is the robust, direct language of a robust, direct people.

Mando'a's origins are unclear. Despite the language's similarities with that of the Taung, from whom the original inhabitants of Mandalore were thought to be descended, it also contains elements not found in other galactic languages.

The structure is agglutinative, meaning that *Mando'a* takes elements of words and joins them together without changing their form to create new words. This practice makes *Mando'a* an expressive language that's easy to learn-- an important consideration for a culture that regularly adopts adults from other races and species.

Mando'a is the language of both the warrior and the poet. Although the pragmatic Mandalorians are rarely seen as sensitive and artistic, they have a rich tradition of epic poems, myths, and songs that are recited and sung among the clans as part of their oral history. When you are a nomad, you can't rely on libraries. You take your history with you in your memory.

The language is a very regular one. It has no cases, only two forms of the verb and a tense prefix system, and simple rules for creating adjectives out of nouns and verb stems. Spelling and punctuation have optional forms so it's hard to get it wrong. What other species might take for sloppy grammar, Mandalorians embrace as the right of the individual *Mando'ad* (son or daughter of Mandalore) to add their own touches to their language, much as they customize their armor.

Although most Mandalorians conduct business transactions in *Basic* and Huttese, long association with both languages has had little impact on *Mando'a*. Respect for the language's original form--and its inherent flexibility-- means that few words are borrowed from other tongues. When the need for a new word arises, the Mandalorians prefer to create it from *Mando'a*'s existing vocabulary. Modern *Mando'a* has an uncomplicated grammar but some of its concepts require a little adjustment for a Basic speaker. It's frequently vague about tenses and has no gender. The good news is that it's logical: word order is important, as in Basic, and there is no need to make adjectives and verbs agree with subjects.

Mando'a has adopted a prefix system to indicate tenses to avoid confusing the *aruetiise*, or non-Mandalorians. Colloquially, there is no past tense for *Mando'ade*, because they live their history, and no future tense because they have no plans beyond surviving the day. In fact, some hard-liners say that expressing ideas in the future tense shows a reluctance to accept death, and is un-Mandalorian. But business is business, so a concession has been made to a galaxy where linear time tends to matter, especially for legal contracts. But the fact that *Mando'ade* carefully amass fortunes is proof that they do think very much beyond the day, or at least plan for their children's welfare.

The prefixes *ru* (past) and *ven* (future), placed between the subject and the verb, distinguish the language's three simple tenses. There is no passive verb form; it's active or nothing, in keeping with the decisive *Mando* nature. The pronoun indicates the part of the verb, which can be confusing for some non-*Mando'a* speakers, but is clear to anyone who speaks *Basic*.

Syntax is critical in spoken *Mando'a*. Word order is everything, as there are no cases or verb variations. Poetic or sung *Manod'a* is much more free-form and can be hard for non-Mandalorians to translate. Most poems and songs are embedded in culture, so all native *Mando'a* speakers understand the meanings.

VERBS

The infinitive ends in -ir, -ar, -ur, -or or -er. Removing the “r” usually produces the stem, e.g.:

juror: to bear or carry

Ni juri kad: I carry a saber.

Sometimes an apostrophe separates the terminal vowel, to indicate the slight glottal stop of some Mandalorian accents. This apostrophe, known as a *beten*, or sigh--as in *Mando'a--* can also indicate breathing, pronunciation, or dropped letters.

So *ni jur'i kad* (I carry a saber) or even *ni jur'kad* is as correct as *ni juri kad* in some communities. *Mando'a* is predominantly a spoken language, and contractions and pronunciation variations occur much as they do among *Basic* speakers. Dropping or eliding the terminal vowel of the conjugated verb to ease pronunciation is especially common in poetry and song.

The verb *cuyir* (to be) is frequently dropped and indicated by word order, as in *ni (cuyi) verd--* I (am) a warrior. The tendency to drop words that Basic speakers expect to hear can create confusion and appear abrupt, but over millennia *Mando'ade* have adopted the terse style of military orders, assuming that unspoken words are understood. To say “It’s good”, a Mandalorian will often just say *jate* (JAH-tay) or the full form with the verb, *bic cuyi jate*.

OTHER WAYS TO USE VERBS

The addition of the prefix *tion* turns a statement into a question. *Gar verborad'ni* means “You’re hiring me.” Add the prefix and it becomes the question “*Tion gar'verborad'ni?* (“Are you hiring me?”)

The prefix *ke* (from the word for order) indicates a command. Using *ke* with the infinitive is formal, but in everyday colloquial use the verb loses its -r ending.

Ke nu jurkadir sha Mando'ade! or *Ke nu'jurkadi sha Mando'ade!*: Don’t mess with Mandalorians!

To create the negative form of a verb-- or, in many cases, a noun-- Mandalorians add the prefix *n'*, *nu*, *nu'* or even *ne* (depending on ease of pronunciation) before either the whole sentence or the negative phrase, depending on meaning. Pronunciation is always a key factor in determining which letters are dropped when spoken. The negative prefix often denotes negative forms of nouns, much as we use the prefix *un-*, such as *ne'briikase* (unhappy), which *Basic* speakers can

understand immediately. But there are also more unusual examples, such as *ne'waadas* (poverty or “un-wealth”).

Here is a summary of the verb forms, using *jurir*:

Ni juri kad: I carry a saber.

Nu'ni juri kad: I don't carry a saber.

Ni ven juri kad: I will carry a saber.

Ni ru juri kad: I carried saber.

Ke juror kad: Carry that saber! (Formal.)

Ke'nu juror kad: Put that saber down! (Literally, “Don't carry that saber!”)

NOUNS AND OTHER PARTS OF SPEECH

Gender nouns are the same for men and women. Gender is implied contextually, if relevant. Father and mother are the same word, a unique system among the languages of sexually reproducing beings. *Son* and *daughter* are the same word, as well. Where gender clarity is necessary, the adjectives *jagyc* (male) or *dalyc* (female) are added.

The indefinite article *eyn*, (an) is almost always dropped except for emphasis, as is the definite article *te*, or the more emphatic *haar* (the).

Plurals are formed by adding -e. The “e” is always pronounced. For example, *ade* (sons, daughters, or children) is pronounced AH-day. The plural was originally indicated by an -a suffix, which has disappeared over time. It's thought to have been vocalized originally as a long ay sound. When a word ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding -se, as in *aruetiise*, the plural of *aruetii*.

PRONOUNS

As with nouns, pronouns have no gender. Some are also possessives, such as *gar*, which means both you and your, and-- as in *Basic*-- is both singular and plural. *Kaysh* means both him and her, and his and hers. *Val* means they or theirs.

However, *ni* (me), *ner* (my), *mhi* (we) and *cuun* (our) do have different forms. This is thought to be a remnant of an ancient Mandalorian dialect.

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS: ONE AND THE SAME

Adjectives and adverbs are formed by adding the suffix of -la or -yc (pronounced eesh), depending on which makes the pronunciation easier. So both *jagyc* and *jagla* can mean masculine. There is also no distinction drawn between adjectives and adverbs. Non-*Mando'a*

speakers may mistakenly believe Mandalorians to be poorly educated if they say in Basic, “The boys done good.” It simply means that they’re unfamiliar with the past tense and adverbial forms. Either way, it’s a bad idea to point out this apparent grammatical shortcoming. Comparatives and superlatives tend to be constructed from adjectives with *-shy’a* for the comparative (e.g. *dralshy’a*: brighter, stronger) or *-ne* for the superlative (e.g. *jatne*: best).

VOCABULARY

The words a culture uses express its values and outlook. There is no Mandalorian word for hero. Heroic behavior is expected of both genders: it’s not exceptional. There are, though, several words for coward and criminal.

Hut’uun is the worst insult, meaning a coward, although Hutt don’t appear to know (or care) that the word stems from Mandalorian distaste for the Hutts’ preference for hiring others to do their fighting for them.

Understand the derivation of Mandalorian words, and you understand the Mandalorian mind. A classic example is the word *taylir*: to keep or hold. Adding the prefix *kar-* (from the word for heart, *kar’ta*), creates *kar’taylir*-- to hold in the heart, or to know. Mandalorians have long relied on oral history rather than written records and memorize most of their knowledge, believing that the heart is the true seat of the intellect. Adding one more word, though, makes *kar’taylir* take on an entirely different meaning-- *kar’taylir darasuum* means to hold in the heart eternally, and therefore to know eternally, and so to love. Mandalorians believe that the essence of loving someone is to complete knowledge, not romantic mystery. This philosophy is typical of a nomadic warrior race for whom trust, loyalty, and the ability to rely on your spouse and your clan is paramount. *Mando’ade* are not ones for romantic gestures, but they’re almost always faithful, reliable partners.

PRONUNCIATION

Mando’a is pronounced much as Basic, with a few exceptions. There is no “f”, “x”, or “z”, although some regions do pronounce “p” almost the same as ph and “s” as z. Those letters have been added to the Mandalorian written alphabet to aid the transliteration of foreign words. Occasionally, the pronunciation of “t”s and “d”s are swapped. “T” is the modern form; “d” is archaic. “V” and “w” are also sometimes interchangeable, as are “b” and “v”-- another regional variation. “J” is now pronounced as a hard “J” as in joy, but is still heard as “y” in some communities.

The initial “h” is a word usually aspirated, except in its archaic form in some songs and poems, and “h” is always pronounced when it occurs in the middle of a word. There are no silent letters in *Mando’a*. Like its people, what you see is what you get. Other points to note:

-uy: pronounced oo-ee

-U: oo

cye: shay

-yc: sh after a vowel

c: k, when it comes before a [vowel except y] at the beginning of a word

c: s, when it comes before other vowels at the beginning of a word or in the middle of a word

cy: sh or ch

Pronouncing terminal consonants varies in songs. They often become extra syllables. For examples, *tor* becomes to-rah and *tang* becomes tan-gah to maintain rhythm and meter.

BASIC PHRASES

Su cuy'gar (soo-COO-ee-gahr): Hello (or, You're still alive.)

Su'cuy (soo-COO-ee): short form, similar to "Hi"

Ret'urcye mhi (re-TOOR-shay mee): Goodbye (or, Maybe we'll meet again.)

Ret' (rett): Short form, as in "Bye"

Gedet'ye (ged-ETT-yay): Please

Vor entye (vor-ENT-yeh): Thank you

Vor'e (VAW-re): Short form, such as "ta" or "thanks"

MANDALORIAN LANGUAGE IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

Birth, marriage, death, and earning a living: what preoccupies us also preoccupies Mandalorians. The following chants, declarations, and words are part of the Mandalorian life cycle.

Buy'ce gal, buy'ce tal (this is a popular drinking song among Mandalorian soldiers.)

Buy'ce gal, buy'ce tal

Verbor'ad ures aliit

Mhi draar baat'i meg'parjii'se

Kote lo'shebs'ul nerit

Loose translation, edited for strong language:

A pint of ale, a pint of blood.

Buys men without a name

We never care about who wins

So you can keep your fame.

This cynical chant expresses mercenaries' wry pragmatism. Not all Mandalorians are mercenaries, but when they are, they accept that life can be cheap and victory irrelevant.

Pre-Battle Chant	Translation
Oya'cye	Life
Ky'ram	Death
Mare'cye	Revelation
Darasuum	Eternity
Oya! Oya!	Let's live! Let's hunt!

An ancient chant to prepare for battle or for a hunt, this is as near to a prayer as *Mando'ade* get. The word for hunting is related to the word for life--*oyacye*--because *Mando'ade* regard life as a hunt for identity and inner strength, ending in the "kill" of finding eternity.

The *Mando'a* dictionary (go to Hyperspace online) shows the most commonly used Mandalorian words. As research continues, more vocabulary is being collated by the Galactic Institute of Linguistics. Take the simple grammatical rules outline here, and see if you can create your own *Mando'a* sentences.

Pakod--oya! It's easy--let's go!

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